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ABSTRACT

An effective model for analyzing revision processes in writing needs to synthesize what research has shown about the process, the strategies involved, and what is known about students' revision strategies. Development of such a model also requires recognizing that (1) a relationship exists between reading and writing in the revision process, (2) strategies are based on a set of heuristics in the revision process, (3) revision is part of the recursive nature of the composing process, and (4) a relationship exists between revision and the writer's knowledge and familiarity with the subject, audience, and style. Revision behaviors need to be analyzed from the viewpoint of the reader, and those behaviors that occur during the rehearsal or prewriting stage must also be considered. In a study of the revision processes of four professional writers, conducted within these parameters, the writers indicated that revisions are centered on the goals of communicating a specific message to a specific audience as effectively as possible. Although they differed in the stages during which they engaged in various revisions, all admitted spending a great deal of time during the rehearsal period to consider and revise their decisions concerning voice, point of view, style, and organization. Eleven functions observed in the case studies appeared to provide a comprehensive as well as descriminating means for describing the revision process. (An outline of the 11 functions, a model for evaluating revision, and sample drafts indicating the functions used are included.) (HTH)

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MODEL FOR ANALYZING REVISION

By
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CS 208 388

Model for Analyzing Revision

As researchers have delved into the various aspects of the composing process, they have increasingly discovered the complexities involved. One area in which each study appears to reveal new depths is that of revision. Because of the complex nature of the process, it has been difficult to develop a valid model for analyzing revision. An effective model needs to synthesize (1) what is known about the revision process, based on the research of Emig[1], Graves[2], Flowers and Hayes[3], and others; (2) the strategies involved in revision, based on discussions by professional writers ranging from James to Hemingway, to Mailer, and (3) what has been learned about students' revision activities, based on the research of Sommers[4], Perl[5], Bridwell[6], etc. The development of such a model involves the recognition of four characteristics: (1) a relationship exists between reading and writing in the revision process, (2) strategies are based on a set of heuristics in the revision process, (3) revision is involved in the recursive nature of the composing process and (4) a relationship exists between revision and the writer's knowledge and familiarity with the subject, audience, and style.

The revision process involves not only the act of writers, but also the act of readers. During the revision phase of the composing process, the writer actually stops writing to read. Murray[7], Graves and Sommers have all cited the reading behaviors of writers during pauses, relating these pauses to the quality of the writing. In revising, the writer moves between thinking of the content of a piece in the role of reader and expressing that thought through drafting in the role of writer. Graves[8] attempts to explain this phenomenon by postulating that

"The mind is capable of contemplating the language it creates." And Vygotsky[9] establishes a basis for this theory of the relationship between reading and writing during the act of composing in his discussion of the relationship between thought and word. He suggests that words give rise to thoughts which, in turn, are expressed in words.

If revision is a process which involves both reading and thinking, then it seems that the behaviors occurring within the process need to be analyzed from the viewpoint of a reader. Since a reader analyzes the elements within a piece of discourse as they relate to the text of that piece, it seems that revisions need to be analyzed as they relate to the text of a work. And, in fact, this is exactly what is done when students are provided with feedback on their drafts in an effort to help them engage in effective revision. If, as Robert Bain, suggests, students, in analyzing a draft in preparation for revision, need to consider such questions as, "What does the writer promise to do? Has he kept his promise?", "Is there a perceivable order to the presentation of his feelings and ideas?", and "Is the language appropriate to the author's voice and subject?", [10] then it would appear that an analysis of revision should reflect a relationship between the changes the student eventually makes and the text of the piece.

However, to date, studies, like those by Sommers and Bridwell, have been mainly concerned with studying syntactical and rhetorical elements as they relate to structural changes in revision, rather than with text-based changes. These studies need to be extended in order to fully describe what writers actually do during the revision phases of the composing process and to account for the dual role of the writer during these phases.

Lester Faigley and Stephen Witte[11] appear to have recognized the need to analyze revision in relation to text by developing a taxonomy which emphasizes meaning. Their taxonomy distinguishes between those revisions which are text-based

and thus, affect meaning, and those which are surface changes and do not affect meaning. However, they use elements related to linguistic operations. While these provide a means for describing the changes in the text based categories, which are for analyzing how writers make text-based changes, they do not provide a description of why writers make such changes. Criteria need to relate to the purpose of the changes if they are to reflect the aspects of the text suggested by Bain.

In addition to reflecting a text bias, the descriptors will also need to reflect the process inherent in revision. The writer-turned-reader not only reads what he/she has written during the revision process, but, as Vygotsky points out, he/she also thinks about it. This thinking is manifested in problem solving behaviors as described by Della Piana[12] and Murray.[13] Murray sees the writer in the role of reader, posing two major questions while reading his/her works: "Am I saying what I want to say?" and "Am I communicating what I want to say to my audience?" If the response to either or both of these questions is negative, the writer must attempt to define the problem, discover the cause of the dissonance between his/her intent and the written work and then find a solution. Thus, it would seem that a model for analyzing revision should not only be consistent with a reader's viewpoint, but should also be consistent with the writing process.

Another problem in analyzing revisions in a piece of discourse is the need to study revisions which occur during the rehearsal phase of the composing process. Studies, such as those by Flower and Hayes and Faigley and Witte have indicated that, because of the recursive nature of the composing process, revision can occur during the rehearsal period. In fact, revisions which occur during the rehearsal period are often major ones, concerning such aspects as tone, style and organization — revisions that would require large changes if the thoughts were expressed in a written draft. Murray[14] states that a writer may try as many as sixty introductions before he/she settles on one. As many as half or even three quarters of these

introductions, which establish the point of view, voice, and organization of a piece, may occur in the writer's mind and never be written down. Thus, criteria used for studying revision will need to be capable of reflecting changes in thoughts.

Criteria for studying revision also need to be sufficiently discriminatory to differentiate among contexts in which writing occurs. The amount and types of revision in which professional writers engage are dependent upon a number of variables, including the writer's familiarity with the subject matter, the length of the assignment, the audience and purpose for the assignment, the mode and genre in which the assignment is to be written and the writer's personal composing habits. A professional writer who is familiar with writing for a specific audience in a specific subject often does not need to engage in revisions relating to style or point of view, just as the writer familiar with the format for an annual business report usually does not need to engage in large scale revisions related to organization. The results of Faigley's and Witte's study comparing professional and student writers appears to re-enforce this theory. They found extreme diversity, depending on the above variables, in the way professional writers revised. A valid model for analyzing revision needs to consider such aspects as writer's knowledge of the subject, of the audience, and familiarity with the style.

The relationship of text to revision is important if any kind of judgmental value is to be placed on revisions. Previous evaluative studies by Bridwell and Sommers have implied a direct relationship between the size of structural units altered in revision and imporovements in written discourse. By evaluating students' revisions according to the size of structural units, they assumed that students, who engaged in revision involving large structural units, would improve the quality of their work more than students whose revisions encompassed only small structural units. When their studies revealed the failure of many of the students to revise in large "chunks," they concluded that the students' failure was caused by a lack of

knowledge, skills, and motivation to do effective revision. However, the students may not have made major structural changes because their knowledge of the subject or familiarity with the style made such revision unnecessary. Thus, evaluative studies of students' revisions need to consider the context in which a piece is written.

Such studies on the revision phases of the composing process will need:

(1) To be content related

(2) To infer an heuristic approach

(3) To provide for the recursive nature of the composing process

(4) To be context related

Using these parameters, I engaged in several case studies of my own revisions and those of three other professional writers.[15] I elected to begin the study with a 1,500 word informative essay. I had written the article only a month previously and all of the drafts, from the first to the final, published version, still existed. Since the article had been written recently, I could remember fairly well the problems which I had encountered.

I examined what was happening in relation to the text as it was being revised during the rehearsal and the between and during drafting stages of the revision process. I attempted to review all revisions on each draft to determine (1) the function which the revision served, i.e., to reorganize material, to change the tone; and (2) the specific operation performed, i.e., reordering paragraphs, substituting words. I then attempted to categorize my results. (See sample article with original and revised drafts in Appendix.) There appeared to be eleven categories and functions with the operations overlapping these eleven categories. (See Figure 1). Interestingly, these eleven categories encompass all of those implied by Bain, though Bain's checklist was not consulted until after these categories were derived.[16]

To determine whether or not these categories were applicable to other pieces of writing, I examined drafts from a variety of other works which I had written during the past year. These included such diverse forms as instructional material, business letters, a research proposal and several magazine feature articles. I also had to determine whether the revisions of the other writers had similar functions, and I studied their drafts and discussed their revisions with them. Their writing ranged from persuasive essays to personal poetry. My own drafts and those of the other writers indicated that all revisions were encompassed by the original eleven categories. Thus, they appear to be comprehensive in their scope.

The results of the study seem to indicate that a writer's revisions are centered around three text-based objectives: (1) to communicate a specific message, (2) to communicate a message to a specific audience,and (3) to communicate a message to an audience as effectively as possible. Murray, Della Piana and others have written much about the first two objectives. The third objective seems to be the reason that professional writers often continue to revise even after they have achieved the first two objectives.

Thus, the angle for the sample article, concerning ways parents could help their children develop an interest in the arts in their own homes, had to be altered because it did not provide an effective means of achieving coherence. The original angle evolved around providing children with arts activities on rainy and sick days. However, after drafting the introduction and several pages, I noticed that the only transitions I could use were "Another activity you can play on a rainy day" or "A third type of game you can play." While such transitions may be correct, they are exceedingly dull . I began to search for a more effective plan for achieving coherence. Eventually I realized that I needed to change the

angle to center around the way different parents involved their children in the different arts--visual arts, drama, written expression, music. This plan proved to be far more effective in pulling the disparate elements together.

The results of the study also indicate that, while writers differ in the stages during the composing process in which they engage in various revisions, all admitted spending a great deal of time during the rehearsal period to consider and revise their decisions concerning voice, point of view, style and organization. Thus, many of the actual drafts of the pieces studied often did not reveal any large structural revisions in the first category for altering form since these were made during rehearsal and prior to drafting. However, neither were large scale revisions in the first category limited to the rehearsal period. Several drafts of pieces, which included both the poetic and expository modes, revealed that revisions in the first category were made between drafts, and even during drafts as the example demonstrates in the changing of the angle. Cummings also made changes between drafts in the first category. In the successive drafts of a poem, which was revised over a period of several years, he made vast changes in both the form and meaning of a work.

In relation to writers previous knowledge and familiarity with a subject, style and audience, the results of the study were similar to those obtained by Faigley and Witte. Writers demonstrated considerable differences in the types of revisions in which they engaged and in those revisions which they considered to be of the most concern and to require the most time.

The four writers differed considerably in the number of revisions in which they engaged. Both Cummings and my own drafts appeared almost illegible as we attempted to discover what we had to say through drafting essays and poetry. Zimmerman and Bartholomae made fewer total revisions in their functional work. Zimmerman dictated most of her reports on a tape recorder. She revised mainly during

drafting and most of the revisions consisted of changes in vocabulary and syntax. Baer spent much of her time considering what she planned to write and revising mentally. Drafts for her medical news stories were relatively clean, incorporating few changes though there were changes in all but the first category. Interestingly, three of the four writers specifically commented that they believed they spent an unusual amount of time working on transitions, which might consist of no more than the addition or substitution of a single sentence between sections or paragraphs to achieve coherence.

These case studies reveal that the functions are not linear but interconnected. The writer moves in and out of them, a change in organization signalling a need for a transition which in turn creates a need to subordinate an idea, which triggers a change in syntactic structures, not only in the particular sentence affected but in the following one also. Or the expression of an idea may require the reorganization of material which then necessitates deleting information which in turn causes a need for creating a transition. Thus, the change I made in the angle of the sample article caused me to delete the original introduction which in turn caused me to add two sentences, "Betty Berdiansky is another mother..." and "Betty was especially interested in instilling an appreciation for music..." to create a smooth transition between the sections on the introduction of the Zimmerman and Berdiansky children to the arts and to relate the Berdiansky segment to the angle. These changes, in turn, caused me to change the structure of the second sentence in the introductory paragraph to the Berdiansky segment from a direct subject-verb-object structure to one beginning with an appositional phrase to vary the syntactic rhythm. In addition, some of the revisions have multiple effects. The reorganization of the position of the friend's name, which is achieved by moving the proper noun from the second paragraph to the very beginning of the first paragraph when the friend is first mentioned, also provides for more immediacy between the audience and the writer.

The studies also indicate that, though the functions contain solutions to problems in a piece of writing, there is not a one to one relationship between a problem, a function and an operation. A writer may diagnose a problem in his/her work as a lack of coherence. However, he/she needs to determine in which of several alternative operations to engage to create a coherent piece. The solution may be as complicated as creating an entirely new angle around which to develop the piece, as I did for the example which involved deleting a large section, or as simple as adding transitions, which might involve structural units as small as the sentence to hold the sections together as occurred when I inserted the two sentences, "Betty Berdiansky is another mother..." and "Betty was especially interested in instilling an appreciation for music..."

The eleven functions, resulting from the case studies, appear to provide a comprehensive as well as discriminating means for describing the writer's process of revision and to be within the parameters which were established. They are text related, reflecting an analytic approach to the text. Because the studies from which the functions evolved, involved interviews with writers as well as an examination of their drafts, they include revisions which were made during rehearsal. In addition, because writers did not engage in every form of revision in every work, they appear to reflect the writer's previous knowledge in which they occurred. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that these eleven functions would provide a valid set of criteria for analyzing revision and I would propose a model for analyzing and evaluating revision using these functions as criteria. (See Figure 2.)

I believe this model will not only provide a means to analyze what a student is doing during revision, but will offer a viable means for evaluating the efficacy of students' revisions. However, the evaluators need to be careful to assess the revisions qualitatively rather than quantitatively. Such a model requires that the evaluator assess the students' revisions in terms of the three text-based objectives

rather than in terms of whether or not the students engage in all of the functions or how many times they engage in the various functions of the revision process. By studying the drafts, the evaluator can determine what problems existed in a composition, e.g. whether information was insufficient to explicate an idea or ideas did not follow in logical order. Then, by looking at the functions in which the student engaged, the evaluator can determine what has been done, i.e., information expanded, ideas reordered. Finally, the evaluator can assess whether or not the students' operations were successful in solving the problem.

Further studies need to be made to explore the validity of this model and its applicability. Studies which would suggest possible relationships between the functions and the structural aspects of revision, which would provide sub-categories for the problem-related areas, which would examine the validity and reliability of these criteria for evaluating students' revisions need to be made if we are to obtain a comprehensive view of the process of revision and develop methods for helping students learn to engage effectively in revision.

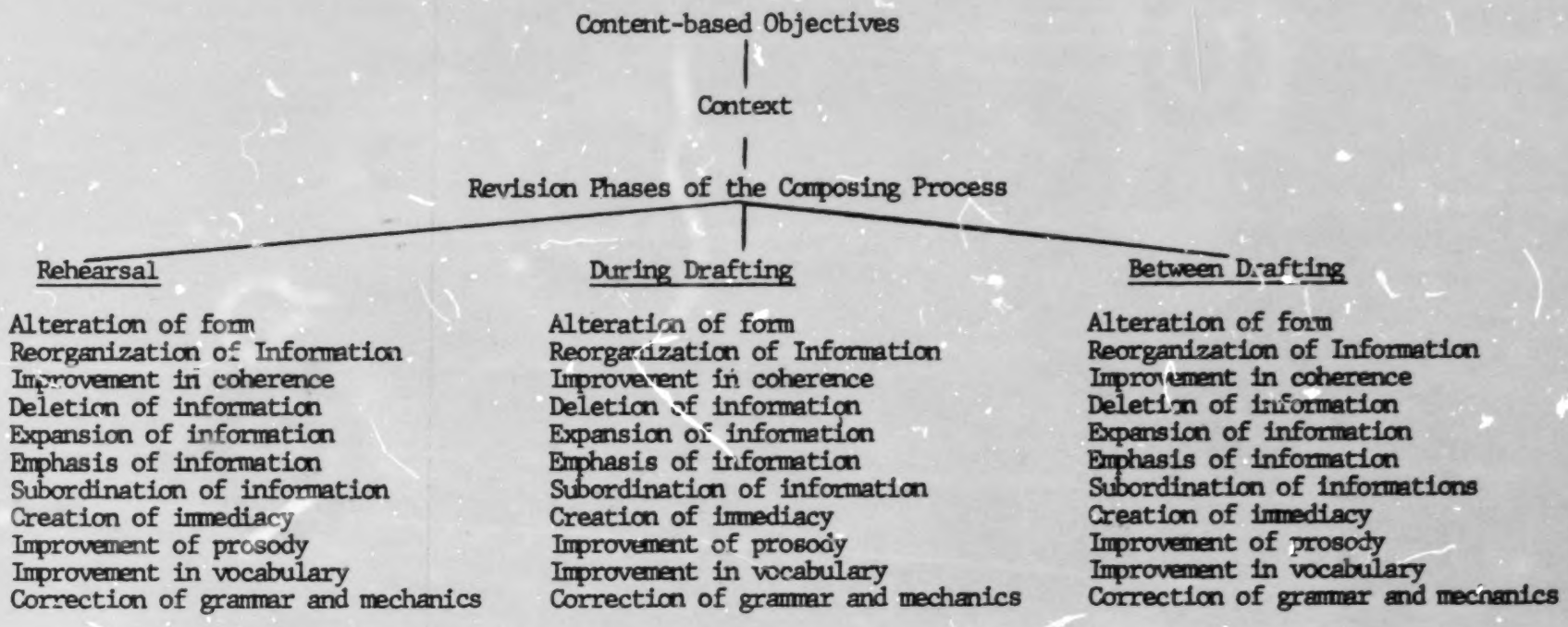
Figure 1

A DESCRIPTION OF REVISION FUNCTIONS AND OPERATIONS

Function	Purpose	Operation*
Alteration of form	Developing a form that is effective and consistent with the purpose and audience.	Changing tone, angle, voice, point of view, person, style, etc.
Reorganization of information	Organizing the information in some logical arrangement to communicate the message.	Reorganizing ideas, sections, paragraphs, sentences, words.
Improvement in coherence	Achieving a coherence between the whole piece and its various parts to communicate the message.	Creating transitions between ideas, sections, paragraphs, sentences, words.
Deletion of information	Eliminating excessive information in relation to the purpose and the audience.	Deleting ideas, sections, paragraphs, sentences, words.
Expansion of information	Providing sufficient information in relation to the purpose and the audience.	Adding ideas, sections, paragraphs, sentences, words.
Emphasis of information	Emphasizing information necessary to communicate the message.	Reorganizing, adding, substituting ideas, sections, paragraphs, sentences, words.
Subordination of information	Subordinating secondary information so it does not interfere with the main part of the message.	Reorganizing, deleting, substituting ideas, sections, paragraphs, sentences, words.
Creation of immediacy	Creating the proper degree of immediacy between the author and the audience.	Changing voice, person, tense; adding quotes.
Improvement of prosody	Creating for the audience and purpose appropriate syntactic rhythms.	Changing sentence, clause, phrase, word patterns.
Improvement in vocabulary	Making the language appropriate and effective for the audience and purpose.	Changing words; adding metaphors, alliteration, etc.
Correction of grammar and mechanics	Making the piece grammatically and mechanically appropriate for the audience and purpose.	Correcting grammar, word usage, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, graphic representation.

Figure 2

A MODEL FOR ANALYZING AND EVALUATING REVISION



Appendix: Sample Article

Original Draft

(a, d) Rain, rain, go away,
Come again some other day,
Little Johnny wants to play.

This all too familiar poem expresses a wish made as fervently by parents as by children, for rainy days can be as difficult to get through for Johnny's mother, as they can be for Johnny....As the rain continues to fall, mother finds herself embarked on a never ending treasure hunt to find new and interesting activities to keep the children occupied.

Sick days can be even more difficult for children who must not only be inside but often need to be kept quiet....

While these days can be frustrating for mothers and boring for children, they can also provide a perfect opportunity for parents to introduce their children to the arts....

One of the most enjoyable evenings that I can remember spending occurred several years ago while I was visiting some old friends in Philadelphia where I had grown up. I had been invited to their home for dinner and while the grown ups sat around the table eating a leisurely meal, my friend's children gulped down what was on their plates and were excused to go upstairs....What they were doing was creating a play. Very shortly (h) the youngest appeared, (e) dressed in one of his father's shirts and ties, to usher us into our seats in the living room. As soon as we were seated, he returned upstairs (g) and, after a rather suspenseful three minute wait, he and his older sister (f) bedecked in mother's nightgown, a pocketbook, hat and the proper showy costume jewelry, made their grand entrance. For the next (k) 15 minutes the two treated us to some poetry, songs and slapstick.

It was as good as most dinner theaters and the price couldn't be beaten....

Juliet, who has become an analyst for a national consulting firm, is not the only mother who has encouraged her children to become involved in the arts by introducing the arts in their own home.

Betty Berdiansky (c) and audiologist (i) in Los Angeles, (j) found a pawn shop near the office building where she worked and over a period of time, she purchased some bongo drums, brushes, a zither and a guitar for her son, Kippy. Then, at home she would put on some good jazz or folk music and she and Kippy would accompany the singer.

Revised Draft

One of the most enjoyable evenings I can remember spending was several years ago while I was visiting my friend, Juliet Zimmerman and her family in Philadelphia. I had been invited to their home for dinner. While the grown ups sat around the table eating....Juliet's children gulped down their food. They they asked to be excused to go upstairs....I learned from my friend that they were creating a play for us....Shortly thereafter, Micah appeared, wearing one of his father's shirts, the tails dragging on the floor behind him. He was also wearing one of his fathers ties, which He had draped around his neck and tied in a large knot. He ushered us into our seats in the living room and then returned upstairs. After a rather suspenseful three-minute wait, he and his sister Erica--bedecked in one of her mother's nightgowns, wearing costume

jewelry, and carrying a pocketbook--made their grand entrance. For the next fifteen minutes, the two children treated us to renditions of their own poems, songs and slapstick comedy. The entertainment was as good as that found in most dinner theaters, and the price couldn't be better....

Juliet who is a marketing analyst for a national consulting firm, is one of many mothers who has cultivated her children's interest in the arts by introducing the arts into her own home....

Betty Berdiansky is another mother who began developing her child's interest in the arts by incorporating the arts into her son's play schedule. An audiologist living in Los Angeles, Betty was especially interested in instilling an appreciation for music in her son Kip. Several years ago she discovered a pawnshop near the office building where she worked. Over a period of time, she purchased from the pawnshop bongo drums, brushes, a zither, and a guitar. During evenings with her son, she would put good jazz or folk music records on her stereo and she and Kip would play an accompaniment to the record.

Key to Revision Functions

a. Alteration of form--The angle did not provide an effective means of coherence and needed to be changed.

b. Reorganization of information--There was too much repetition of the term "my friend." It was necessary to use her name from the beginning to avoid this repetition, so her name was moved up from the second paragraph to the first.

c. Improvement of coherence--The change from the Zimmerman to the Berdiansky family was abrupt and did not indicate the relationship between the Berdianskys and the angle. Two sentences were needed to smooth out the transition between the two families and to fully relate the Berdiansky segment to the angle.

d. Deletion of information--Once the angle was changed, the introduction became superfluous and needed to be deleted.

e. Expansion of information--The description of the boy was insufficient to give the audience a picture of how he appeared. The description needed to be expanded.

f. Emphasis of information--The description of the little girls' dress attire, did not stand out sufficiently, so dashes, rather than commas, were used to set off the description.

g. Subordination of information--The boy's returning upstairs was a minor action but was equated in a compound sentence with the grand entrance of him and his sister. It was therefore necessary to embed his return in the previous sentence.

h. Creation of immediacy--The children appeared rather amorphous so their names were substituted for the more abstract reference of "the youngest" and "older sister."

i. Improvement of prosody--The noun/pronoun, verb, object structure seemed repetitive. The sentence was changed so that an appositional phrase introduced it.

j. Improvement in vocabulary--The word "found" did not have the correct connotation so the word was changed to "discovered."

k. Correction of grammar and mechanics--the number "15" needed to be spelled out to conform with the magazine's style sheet.

Notes

[1]Janet Emig, The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1971.

[2]Donald Graves, "An Examination of the Writing Processes of Seven-Year-Old Children, Research in the Teaching of English, 9 (1975), 227-241.

[3]Linda Flower and John Hayes, "A Cognitive Process of Writing," College Composition and Communication, 32(December, 1981), 365-387.

[4]Nancy Sommers, "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Writers," College Composition and Communication, 31 (December, 1980), 378-388.

[5]Sondra Perl, "The Composing Process of Unskilled College Writers," Research in the Teaching of English, 13 (December, 1979), 317-336.

[6]Lillian Bridwell, "Revising Strategies in Twelfth Grade Students' Transactional Writing," Research in the Teaching of English, 14 (October, 1980), 201-223.

[7]Donald Murray, A Writer Teaches Writing. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968.

[8]Richard Graves. "A Note on the Philosophical Basis of Recursiveness," paper delivered at The Conference on College Composition and Communication, Dallas, Texas, 1981.

[9]L. S. Vygotsky, Thought and Language, Cambridge, Mass.: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1962.

[10]Robert Bain, "Criteria for Evaluating Written Discourse," handout at National Council of Teachers of English Convention, New York, 1977.

[11]Lester Faigley and Stephen Witte, "Analyzing Revision," College Composition and Communication, 32 (December, 1981), 400-408.

[12]Gabrielle Della Piana, "Research Strategies for the Study of Revision Processes in Writing Poetry," Research in Composing: Points of Departure, Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1978.

[13]Donald Murray, "Internal Revision: A Process of Discovery," Research in Composing: Points of Departure, Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1978.

[14]Donald Murray, A Writer Teaches Writing.

[15]Joe Cummings, Former Atlanta Bureau Chief for Newsweek, presently columnist for the Atlanta Constitution; Katie Baer, editor, Hospital Infection Control Newsletter; Juliet Zimmerman, marketing analyst for pharmaceutical companies; George Chambers, poet and novelist, The Null Set.

Figure 1

A DESCRIPTION OF REVISION FUNCTIONS AND OPERATIONS

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Alteration of form	Developing a form that is effective and consistent with the purpose and audience.	Changing tone, angle, voice, point of view, person, style, etc.
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